

To: R9-Deep[R9Deep@epa.gov]
From: Robin, George
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Subject: EPA seeking comment on the Gunnison Project

Nancy, fyi

http://www.willcoxrangenews.com/news/article_a37b2906-cfdf-11e7-960c-c7c0b2ccf584.html

EPA seeking comment on the Gunnison Project

- By Carol Broeder Arizona Range News
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From now through the first week in January, the Environmental Protection Agency is seeking comment on a draft Underground Injection Control permit and aquifer exemption for Excelsior Mining Company.

If approved, the permit would allow Excelsior to construct and operate a copper production facility, Nahal Mogaharabi said last week in an EPA press release.

An in-situ copper mine, the proposed 332-acre Gunnison Copper Project is located about 20 miles west of Willcox, near the “Thing” Travel Center, on I-10.

The in-situ copper recovery process injects a weak acid into porous bedrock. As the solution leaches copper deposits off the rock, it is extracted through surrounding recovery wells and transported to a processing plant, where the solution is separated from the metal.

The EPA is seeking public comment on the draft permit, as well as the proposed aquifer exemption. The permit would allow Excelsior to drill wells, extract copper in solution, and restore the aquifer for more than 20 years. After the 20-year operating period, Excelsior would be required to properly close the wells, continue aquifer restoration for three additional years and monitor the aquifer for at least five more years.

The aquifer would qualify for exemption because it contains commercially reducible minerals and does not serve as a source of drinking water. To ensure protection of the surrounding groundwater, the permit would require Excelsior to “contain all injection associated with the copper production facility within the exempt portion of the aquifer,”

Mogaharabi said.

In addition to the Gunnison Project, Excelsior Mining also owns the nearby Johnson Camp Mine, where the copper processing facilities are located.

The draft Underground Injection Control permit and aquifer exemption may be viewed at the Elsie S. Hogan Library, 100 N. Curtis Ave., in Willcox, or by visiting the website, www.epa.gov/uic/underground-injection-control-permits-region-9.

Comments should be mailed, faxed or e-mailed by Jan. 8, 2018, to:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9 Drinking Water Protection Section,
Mail Code WTR-3-2 75 Hawthorne St., □ San Francisco, CA 94105, Attention: Nancy
Rumrill

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Eric Petermann, with the Herald/Review, contributed to this article.